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Note verbale dated 4 May 2017 from the Permanent Mission of South Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of South Sudan to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the Security Council and transmits herewith the official response of the Transitional Government of National Unity of the Republic of South Sudan to the allegations contained in the final report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan dated 13 April 2017 (S/2017/326) (see annex).

The Permanent Mission should be grateful if you would have the present note verbale and its annex circulated among the members of the Security Council as an official document of the Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 4 May 2017 from the Permanent Mission of South Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Response of the Transitional Government of National Unity of the Republic of South Sudan to the allegations contained in the final report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan dated 13 April 2017

1. Preamble

The Transitional Government of National Unity acknowledges receipt of the usually negative report, dated 13 April 2017, of the so-called Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2206 (2015), extended in accordance with resolution 2290 (2016), which was provided to the Security Council after its submission to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan on 16 March 2017 and its consideration by the Committee on 29 March 2017.

The Transitional Government of National Unity recalls that the intention of Security Council resolution 2206 (2015) was the imposition of sanctions on individuals and entities contributing to the conflict in South Sudan as well as an arms embargo on South Sudan. It was renewed until 31 May 2017 with the adoption of resolution 2290 (2016) by the Council.

In addition to the introduction, the report of the Panel contains negative conclusions against the Republic of South Sudan on obstruction of reconciliation and peace processes, expansion and extension of the conflict, violations of international humanitarian and international human rights law, obstruction of humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, procurement of arms, implementation of the asset freeze and travel ban and, lastly, the recommendations. The response of the Transitional Government of National Unity is in italics and structured in the order of the issues listed above for ease of understanding and reference.

2. Obstruction of reconciliation and peace processes

In this area, the Panel made six false accusations:

(i) Directly criticized the role of President Salva Kiir in the national dialogue process, claiming perceptions of its lack of inclusivity by civil society, some opposition figures and some international observers and that it is a mechanism to "circumvent justice and accountability".

On point 2 (i) of the Panel:

The national dialogue was never a regional, international or Security Council initiative. It is exclusively the initiative of the President, declared on 14 December 2016, with clear objectives and a road map.

We are cognizant of politically motivated concerns aimed at undermining the credibility of the process, including questions around its inclusivity. After all, the steering committee is not meant to be the body that will engage in dialogue. It is the body that is supposed to organize that process, proposing how each state, county, payam or boma will participate and what issues are to be discussed at the various levels of the national dialogue conferences.

Despite the political manipulations to downplay the national dialogue initiative, the President nevertheless listened to the views and concerns of the

various stakeholders, including our partners working for many international institutions and embassies. On the basis of these views and concerns, the President, through Republican Order No. 08/2017, dated 25 April 2017, reconstituted the national dialogue steering committee.

The reconstituted steering committee now comprises 103 individuals representing a large section of the South Sudanese from different walks of life (6 national figures to lead the group and 88 representatives), in addition to 9 external members representing Kenya (3) and Uganda, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa (1 each).

How can the Panel justify its negative conclusion on the intentions of the national dialogue? The so-called Panel of Experts should be educated to the effect that while transparency and accountability might feature in the dialogue process, justice and accountability are the subjects of chapter V of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in respect of which the Transitional Government of National Unity, and the President personally, have reiterated a firm commitment to its full implementation in letter and spirit.

(ii) That the political arrangement between President Salva Kiir and the First Vice-President, Taban Deng Gai, does not meaningfully include significant segments of the opposition, including major armed elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in Opposition, other political factions and many non-Dinka communities.

(iii) That this current political arrangement is not nationally unifying, has not arrested the security and humanitarian crisis and is increasingly an obstacle to genuine political reconciliation, undermining the transition to inclusive and sustainable peace.

(iv) That the governing leadership is a one-sided arrangement in which Deng Gai's influence is limited and strategic decisions continue to be made largely by President Kiir.

(v) That the dominance of President Kiir's faction in the prevailing political arrangement has allowed him and the Dinka political and security elites to maintain overwhelming influence over the political and security dynamics of the security situation.

(vi) This has resulted in the continuation of unilateral actions and rule by presidential decrees, in contravention of both the Agreement of the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and the Transitional Constitution, such as President Kiir's decision to raise the number of states to 32, beyond the already controversial 28 states.

On point 2 (ii) to (vi) of the Panel:

The Panel is totally oblivious to the cordial working relationship between President Kiir and First Vice-President Taban Deng Gai that has immensely contributed to the current peace and stability in our country. First of all, General Taban Deng Gai, as a senior member of the SPLM-A in Opposition Political Bureau, was elected by those members of SPLM-A in Opposition who support the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

They democratically elected General Taban Deng Gai as the new Chairman of SPLM-A in Opposition and then recommended him to President Salva Kiir on 23 July 2016, requesting his appointment as the First Vice-President, replacing Riek Machar following his rebellion, for the third time, in July 2016. After all, he was SPLM-A in Opposition's chief negotiator of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Out of sheer curiosity, we cannot help

asking the question: who would the members of the Panel of Experts have nominated if they had been asked to do so?

How can the Panel disparage such a democratically conducted process as a "political arrangement between President Kiir and Deng Gai" and make negative allegations, (as per 2 (ii) and (iii) above), just to discredit the successful impact it has had on the continuity of the Agreement?

It seems the Panel is ignorant of the establishment and structure of the Presidency, comprising the President, the First Vice-President and the Vice-President, and the collegial decision-making process being undertaken under this Presidency arrangement.

The Presidency meetings provide a governance forum for the President and his Deputies to partake in leadership and decisions that influence governance and security under the peace agreement. In addition to the meetings of the Presidency and the decisions taken therein, there is the Council of Ministers, which meets regularly once a week and under extraordinary circumstances as conditions may dictate.

Further, there are routine consultations with key stakeholders on political and security issues pertaining to the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan as well as on the overall welfare of South Sudan and its people. The decisions taken by the President on political and security issues, by resolution or order or decree, are consistent with the arrangements described above, and in accordance with the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan and the Agreement.

The allegations that the First Vice-President has no influence or has limited influence on strategic matters or that the President or Dinka elites have the upper hand in political and security decisions are a clear incitement and propaganda to provoke ethnic tensions and conflict in South Sudan. They conclusively aim to discredit the President and accuse him of being a tribal chauvinist. The Transitional Government of National Unity is bitterly disappointed and calls on the Panel of Experts to revoke these statements and apologize to the people of South Sudan for that matter.

Establishment Order No. 36/2015 issued by the President on 2 October 2015, creating 28 states in the Republic of South Sudan, is not a violation of the Agreement. The establishment order is already part of the transitional Constitution, 2011 (Amendment 3, 2015), having been approved by the Council of Ministers and the National Legislature. The increase in the states to 32 under Republican Order No. 02/2017 dated 14 January 2017 was by the agreement of the key stakeholders, including First Vice-President Taban Deng Gai, and not a unilateral decision of the President.

It must be recapped that the Transitional Government of National Unity is committed to power-sharing arrangements within the context of the Agreement, including in the states created by the said establishment order. It should be noted that decentralization has been a long, historical demand of the people of South Sudan since 1947.

3. Expansion and extension of the conflict

(i) That the available evidence continues to support the Panel's previous findings of command responsibility within the Government and of the centrality of President Kiir and the SPLA Chief of General Staff, Paul Malong, among others, in planning and executing military operations.

(ii) That SPLM/A in Government remains the main belligerent in the war and continues to accord priority to an aggressive military approach over a political solution to the conflict. The report reiterates the lack of inclusivity in the Transitional Government of National Unity.

On point 3 (i) and (ii) of the Panel:

It is surprising that the President and senior officials of the Government and army are being singled out in the course of carrying out their constitutional duties (see 2(ii) above), including command and control (article 153 of the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan) of the army and the other organized forces.

As in any sovereign State, the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the national army and the overall Commander of the other organized forces. The Chief of General Staff is there to support the President. The statement made by the Panel is, therefore, difficult to appreciate.

Admittedly, our country is experiencing a tall order of security challenges. There are sporadic skirmishes across the country, but that there is no active military campaign must be stated firmly and unequivocally. SPLA is under instructions to observe the permanent ceasefire and only respond in self-defence. Occasionally, when aggressed, SPLA has given the rebels hot pursuit in repulsing their attacks. On one or two occasions, SPLA ended up overrunning rebel positions.

The skirmishes being witnessed originate from the proliferation of opportunistic armed groups that have obstructed roads, raped women, abducted children to be recruited into their ranks and killed and maimed innocent citizens going about their routine livelihood activities. These armed groups are equally responsible for the expansion and extension of insecurity into rural South Sudan. Unfortunately, as a result, a sizeable number of villages have been depopulated, forcing people to move to urban areas and towns.

The argument that SPLM/A in Government is the main belligerent preferring war to a political solution (3 (ii) above) is nothing but a political shenanigan by the Panel to fulfil its mandate. Why would SPLM/A sign the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in spite of its shortcomings and initiate a national dialogue if it were not committed to its implementation? Again, for the Panel to say that the Transitional Government of National Unity lacks inclusivity confirms the Panel's serious shortage of knowledge about the Agreement because the Transitional Government is a government of all the key stakeholders, namely SPLM/A, SPLM/A in Opposition, the former detainees and the other political parties of South Sudan.

4. Violations of international humanitarian and international human rights law

(i) The report repeats the same allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law and that these have persisted with near-complete impunity and a lack of genuine effort to prevent them or to punish the perpetrators.

(ii) The report once again alleges that the Government of South Sudan targets civilians on a tribal or political basis and carries out forced displacement of civilians and ethnic cleansing, which, it is claimed, may escalate into possible genocide.

On point 4 (i) and (ii) of the Panel:

The Government has repeatedly made it clear that it has never committed any human rights violations or abuses of international humanitarian law. Isolated cases committed by individuals are investigated and the culprits, upon conviction, are held accountable, given that the Government does not condone impunity.

All rights and freedoms enshrined in international human rights treaties, covenants and instruments ratified or acceded to by the Republic of South Sudan constitute an integral part of the bill of rights. The bill of rights is upheld by the Supreme Court and other competent courts and monitored by the Human Rights Commission in the country.

The rights and freedoms enshrined in the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011, include, among others, the right to life and human dignity, freedom from slavery, servitude and forced labour, and equity before the law, the rights of women, the rights of the child, the right to freedom from torture, the right to fair trial, the right to litigation, religious rights, the right to freedom of expression and media, freedom of assembly and association, and freedom of movement and residence, the right of access to information, the rights of ethnic and cultural communities and the rights of persons with special needs and the elderly, etc.

The Government of the Republic of South Sudan has been fully committed, since the eruption of the senseless conflict on 15 December 2013, to protecting its civilians and their properties within its constitutional mandates.

The Human Rights Commission was established purposely to monitor the implementation of the bill of rights. The Government of South Sudan has acceded to a number of international and regional instruments on human rights and other treaty bodies that monitor and protect human rights.

Many United Nations bodies monitoring and reporting on human rights issues in South Sudan, including the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), already exist in South Sudan. These organizations receive the full cooperation of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan.

5. Obstruction of humanitarian and peacekeeping missions

(i) The report reiterates claims that the Government obstructs the delivery of humanitarian assistance and attacks humanitarian workers and concludes that South Sudan remains the deadliest country in the world for humanitarian workers.

(ii) The report further reiterates the allegations of attacks against United Nations personnel and facilities, as a defence of national sovereignty, and that sustained and systematic violations of the status-of-forces agreement have continued.

On point 5 (i) and (ii) of the Panel:

From the onset of the conflict, the Government undertook to grant unlimited access to all humanitarian agencies without restrictions except in areas where there is insecurity. Thus, on 16 April 2014, the governors, and later, on 17 April 2014, the Minister for National Security were, respectively, ordered to remove illegal roadblocks and tax collection and directed to bring culprits who disobeyed under the full force of the law.

Since its establishment, the Transitional Government of National Unity has been fully committed to granting unrestricted freedom of access to UNMISS personnel and other humanitarian agencies and workers to deliver humanitarian

aid and assistance to all South Sudanese in need, without exception. The Government has stressed the importance of cooperation and coordination with UNMISS, as stipulated in paragraph 12 of section 4 of the status-of-forces agreement, to ensure security, protection and safety during its movements.

The Government has no policy to obstruct the delivery of humanitarian assistance to its own population or obstruct United Nations missions. On the contrary, it is fully committed to rendering humanitarian access and unrestricted UNMISS movement without any hindrance and, to that effect, has taken the measures necessary to facilitate and improve on current procedures.

Procedures for tax exemption on humanitarian deliveries have been improved, entry visas for humanitarian workers are provided free, there are no restrictions on access to any locations, more humanitarian corridors have been opened, and a coordination desk for non-governmental organizations has been established in the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs to provide quick support to the operations of non-governmental organizations in the country.

To confirm the commitment of the Government to providing unrestricted access to humanitarian agencies, the President established a high-level oversight committee to manage the situation. During the last meeting of the Committee, on 28 March 2017, government international partners, including UNMISS, the Department for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the World Food Programme and non-governmental organizations, admitted that the Government was cooperating at the national level and that the difficulties they were facing remained only at the local levels.

Together with its international partners, the Government is increasing the frequency of the Committee meetings and undertaking measures to improve on access and protection of United Nations as well as humanitarian workers. It is obvious that the Panel is not abreast of the improvements being made by the Government in relation to working smoothly with the United Nations and humanitarian agencies.

(iii) The report includes the famine declared recently in two counties of Unity (Leer and Mayendit). The Panel tried to justify that the famine is man-made, caused by the ongoing conflict, denial of humanitarian access and forced population displacement.

On point 5 (iii) of the Panel:

The Transitional Government of National Unity and its international partners use a scientific approach to assessing food security in the country using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification) system. Therefore, the declaration of famine was the result of a scientific analysis based on all the factors that are known to cause food insecurity the world over.

Yes, the insecurity associated with the conflict that erupted in our country in December 2013 and July 2016, respectively, has a degree of influence on food insecurity. But that is not the main factor across South Sudan. Drought and floods are well established to be natural factors that erode resilience and cause food insecurity, not only in South Sudan but Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and many others.

(iv) The report also includes the declaration issued by the Minister of Labour, Public Services and Human Resource Development to raise the fee for foreign work permits from $100 to $10,000 and the threat issued by the Government to expel humanitarian organizations and United Nations agencies that failed to pay permit fees or taxes.

On point 5 (iv) of the Panel:

On the increase in the fee for foreign workers' permits, South Sudan is entitled to collect taxes to raise revenue for government operations. In view of the concerns raised by our development partners, the Council of Ministers constituted a committee, under the chairmanship of the Minister of Finance and Planning, to revisit all the rates, including that of work permits for foreign workers.

For the foreign workers' permits, the Council directed the Ministry of Finance and Planning to collect data from the region and accordingly adjust the fee to the appropriate rate.

6. Procurement of arms

(i) The Panel's evidence shows that there is a continuation of the procurement of weapons by the leadership in Juba for SPLA, the National Security Service and other associated forces and militias.

(ii) The Panel alleged that weapons continue to flow into South Sudan from diverse sources, often with the coordination of neighbouring countries.

(iii) The Panel claimed that the border areas between South Sudan and the Sudan and Uganda remain key entry points for arms, with some smaller numbers of weapons also crossing into South Sudan from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as from further afield, particularly from Egypt.

(iv) The Panel revealed that it is investigating in this context a contract alleged to have been signed by the Government with a company called "Egypt and Middle East for Development" for the provision of "Panthera armoured vehicles", allegations of L-39 jet acquisitions and IL-76 transport aircraft by the Government and attempts by Lieutenant General Paul Malong to develop an ammunition manufacturing facility in Luri area, east of Juba.

(v) The Panel is also investigating a contract alleged to have been signed between the National Security Service with a company based in Seychelles, in the sum of $264 million, covering a very large quantity of heavy weapons, small arms and ammunitions, among other items listed in the report.

On point 6 (i) to (v) of the Panel:

As stated in the previous response of the Transitional Government of National Unity on 28 January 2016, the decision to procure arms for the national army of South Sudan is not undertaken by individuals holding executive positions in the government. There is an ordnance department in SPLA that decides on the type and quantity of arms and equipment necessary for the establishment of a national Army for the new country and in accordance with the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan, 2011 and the SPLA Act, 2009.

South Sudan did not procure weapons of mass destruction or weapons prohibited under any international treaty. South Sudan is a sovereign State and has the duty under its laws to protect its territorial integrity and its people, as the Panel of Experts should have known. Therefore, the procurement of ordinary arms for self-defence is the absolute right of the sovereign Republic of South Sudan. The procurement of such arms is carried out within the provisions of law and is not tantamount to violation of the permanent ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreement cited earlier.

The Panel of Experts must be informed that the allocation of funds for security and defence is the mandate of the Parliament, which oversees the expenditure of the

Government of the Republic of South Sudan, including the army and the other organized forces.

Further, the Republic of South Sudan is in the process of transforming SPLA and the other organized forces into competent, conventional and professional forces. Therefore, it has the right and responsibility to procure ordinary arms to establish a national army and the other organized forces, allowing them to fulfil their respective mandates, including self-defence. The establishment of a professional army in South Sudan is an international requirement being undertaken by all United Nations Member States, and it is not intended for negative purposes.

The Transitional Government of National Unity expresses its gratitude to the Panel for investigating the supply of weapons by Mr. Pierre Dadak, a French/Polish national, which the Panel believes was arrested in Spain last year. It is our view that these weapons are being supplied to SPLM/A in Opposition, of Riek Machar, who persistently rejects a peaceful solution to the conflict he provoked in the first place.

7. Panel's implication of the region and others

(i) The lack of a strong regional or international modality for demanding accountability and adherence to the provisions and timelines of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan has allowed the parties, in particular SPLM/A in Government, to continue to breach the Agreement without censure or consequences from the region or the broader international community, including the Security Council, as they claimed.

(ii) The good bilateral relations currently existing between the Government and countries of the region have afforded the Government an opportunity to clamp down on the activities of the opposition in some neighbouring countries. The report cited as examples the arrest and repatriation of the spokesperson of SPLM/A in Opposition, James Gatdet Dak, the disappearance of some activists in Kenya, the denial of entry to Riek Machar in the Sudan and Ethiopia and the campaign of some Kenyan politicians against South Sudanese opposition groups.

On point 7 (i) and (ii) of the Panel:

South Sudan enjoys cordial diplomatic and bilateral relations with its neighbours. The region understands the political and security situation in South Sudan much more than anybody else. That is why the region was the first to suggest a political solution to the conflict as early as in January 2014 and in the lead-up to the conclusion of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

The Panel should have exercised restraint in making a negative judgment on leaders of the region. The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission can attest to the fact that the Transitional Government of National Unity makes monthly updates on the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and, on that basis, the Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission regularly reports to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union and the United Nations. We accept that there have been delays in the implementation of some areas of the Agreement, but to say that there are no modalities for demanding accountability and adherence to the provisions of the Agreement is simply an unfair exaggeration.

While it is true that the Transitional Government of National Unity relishes its good bilateral relationships with its neighbours in the region, it is not responsible for decisions taken against negative South Sudanese political elements within their

territories. The countries the Panel blames (point 7(iii)) are members of both IGAD and the African Union.

Both IGAD and the African Union have an obligation to comply with the instruments of establishment of these two organizations, in particular with respect to the presence of "negative elements" fighting against a legitimate regime in a neighbouring country. One would have thought that the Panel should have applauded those countries for controlling rebellion and preventing conflict in the IGAD region.

(iii) That the Government continues to send mixed signals, publicly and privately, about its position regarding the deployment of the regional protection force, citing in this regard the statements made by the Minister of Information, Michael Makuei, and President Kiir, respectively.

On point 7 (iii) of the Panel:

Once more, the Panel misled the United Nations Security Council on the deployment of the regional protection force proposed by the region in the aftermath of the eruption of conflict in July 2016 and subsequently authorized by the United Nations Security Council. The Transitional Government of National Unity (see Council resolution 136 2016 of 9 December 2016) accepted the deployment of the regional protection force as per the joint Transitional Government-Security Council communiqué of 4 September 2016.

As we respond to the unfounded allegations of the Panel on this matter, UNMISS can confirm that security clearance and tax exemptions have been granted for various contingents to facilitate the deployment of the regional protection force. Two large pieces of land have also been provided to accommodate the regional protection force. Minister Michael Makuei only made a legitimate comment pertaining to the inclusion of forces from outside the region. Otherwise, what is the purpose of the term "regional" in the name "regional protection force"?

The inclusion of forces from Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan has always been controversial and a matter of concern to the Government of the Republic of South Sudan. It was the President who ruled, showing exemplary leadership, during Council of Ministers meeting No. 20/2016 on 25 November 2016. The President's ruling approved the regional protection force to come with the full list of weapons and equipment designated to it. Again, the Security Council can verify this statement with UNMISS and call upon the Panel to show professionalism when reporting on sensitive issues of a Member State.

The Panel in its own statement "The diplomatic success being gained by the Government in the region towards isolation of Riek Machar, and the shift which has occurred in the position of IGAD member States against supporting Riek Machar's return to the Transitional Government of National Unity" admits the positive decision these countries took to keep Riek Machar in South Africa and how that has stabilized the situation in South Sudan.

(iv) The report cites the resignations of Lieutenant General Thomas Cirillo Swaka, Brigadier General Henry Oyay Nyago and other senior officers and the accusations they levelled against the Dinkas as a continuation of the fracturing of the leadership along tribal lines.

On point 7 (iv) of the Panel:

The Panel based its report and conclusion on political reports by eccentric politicians and radio outlets adversarial to the leadership of the Transitional Government of National Unity. The above statement is clearly an undeniable

testimony. The individuals cited above are combatants who pursued the liberation war alongside their fellow liberators from the Dinka ethnic group.

Logic cannot sustain the accusation made above. These officers resigned for political reasons. We therefore wish to advise the Panel to conduct further research on the personality and credibility of these officers before using their resignations to justify sanctions and an arms embargo against South Sudan.

8. Asset freeze and travel ban

(i) The Panel alleges to have obtained evidence that four of the five individuals sanctioned may maintain assets within South Sudan, mentioning only three of them (Peter Gadet Dak, Gabriel Jok Riak, Marial Chanuong Yol Mangok).

(ii) The Panel similarly disclosed that it has sent out requests to companies in which the sanctioned individuals may have assets as well as to nine banks, requesting confirmation that their financial assets have been frozen, but the Panel has received no responses from the companies or the banks that were approached, except for four banks only.

On point 8 (i) and (ii) of the Panel:

On the Panel's remarks regarding the asset freeze and travel ban, we beg to state that South Sudan bears no responsibility in the matter. We can only hope that the companies and banks the Panel has contacted will respond.

9. Conclusion

(i) Clearly, the so-called Panel of Experts' report was written to achieve its stated objectives based on unfounded allegations of human rights violations, obstruction of reconciliation and peace processes, obstruction of humanitarian assistance and attacks against humanitarian workers.

(ii) Looking at the references used by the Panel of Experts on South Sudan to justify its recommendations, it is obvious that the intention is to persuade the United Nations Security Council, regardless of the current positive security and political realities in the country, to: i. impose sanctions on individuals it accuses of perceived actions and policies that threaten the peace and security and stability of South Sudan; ii. impose an arms embargo; iii. authorize the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate human rights violations; and iv. urge the IGAD member States to reiterate their obligation to enforce the travel ban and asset freeze established under resolution 2206 (2015) and extended under resolution 2290 (2016).

(iii) The intentions of the report, as outlined in (i) above, stand to interrupt the Transitional Government of National Unity in concentrating on critical programmes for the achievement of sustainable peace, political stability and socioeconomic development. What the United Nations needs to do is to assist rather than discourage the Transitional Government with the implementation of:

- Financial reform agenda intended to rebalance revenue and expenditure, which the Panel in its report acknowledges as positive
- Implement the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and engage the other armed groups for comprehensive peace and focus on addressing key drivers of current economic volatility to change the prevailing economic deterioration

- Conduct the national dialogue to consolidate peace, socioeconomic development and national unity
- Concentrate on improvement of its relations with the international community, especially the United Nations, IGAD and the African Union, for mutual interest, including on the deployment of the regional protection force
- Continue to build governance structures and systems of a viable nation State for the world's newest country.

Otherwise the Transitional Government of National Unity expresses its appreciation to the Panel of Experts for its effort to identify areas of challenge in South Sudan and we hope that the explanations we have provided will alleviate the Panel's concerns. Finally, we call on the Panel of Experts and the United Nations, including the Security Council, to work with and assist the Transitional Government in order to reverse the challenges of building a new country. We look forward to a positive engagement with the Panel and the United Nations.